685 EXCISE
Encl C

P78C156-1677

October 24, 1978

Dear Senator Kennedy:

Thank you for forwarding [redacted] inquiry concerning the continuing imprisonment of Rudolf Hess at Spandau Prison in Berlin. B6

The United States Government believes, as do the British and French, that Mr. Hess should be released for humanitarian reasons. He has been confined for more than 30 years, and is now over 80 years old. Over the past decade and most recently in June of this year, we have made repeated representations to the Soviet Union to agree to Mr. Hess' release. Each time the Soviet reply has been negative. They have said that they cannot agree to the release of Mr. Hess because he is a symbol of unrepentant Nazism whose release would be seen as a form of amnesty for Nazism and fascism which the people of the Soviet Union and other countries would not understand.

It is not possible for us, or even the three Western powers acting together, to free Mr. Hess without Soviet concurrence. The international agreements governing his confinement were signed by all four governments, and unanimous agreement is needed to change them.

Despite the fact that we have so far not been successful in obtaining Soviet consent to the release of Mr. Hess, we will continue in the effort. In the meantime we have taken and will continue to take appropriate measures to ensure that the conditions of his imprisonment are alleviated to the greatest extant possible.

The Honorable
Edward M. Kennedy
United States Senate

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY B Thomson DATE MAR 2 1 1983
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE ____
TS AUTH. ____ REASON(S) ____
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☐
RELEASE DENIED☒ in part
A or (FOI) EXEMPTIONS B6

I hope that this information will help explain the situation of Mr. Hess and the position of the US Government to [redacted]

B6

Sincerely,

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary
for Congressional Relations

EUR/CE:RDJohnson:jkr
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Cleared:EUR/CE:RCBarkley
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